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Christopher Millson-Martula
Lynchburg College

Susanna Bartmann Pathak
Virginia Commonwealth University

Carol Pfeiffer
Council of Higher Education (Virginia)

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Cooperative Collection Management in the Consortial Environment: the VIVA Pilot Projects

Christopher Millson-Martula

Director of the Library

Lynchburg College

Susanna Bartmann Pathak

Planning and Assessment Librarian

Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries

Carol Pfeiffer

Senior Coordinator of Academic Affairs

Council of Higher Education [Virginia]

Introduction

The history of cooperative collection development is a tapestry interwoven with the strong fibers of a shared belief in the theoretical value and promise of cooperation and a rather ragged record of achieving that promise. Dominguez and Swindler open their insightful analysis of cooperative collection development at the Research Libraries Triangle University Libraries with the statement that, “[c]ooperative collection development is the flag, motherhood, and apple pie of librarianship.” Using one of these three icons as a metaphor, one might observe that it is easier to salute the flag than to put into practice the beliefs and values that it symbolizes.

Dominguez and Swindler go on to note that despite extensive literature on the topic, there are few “critical analyses based on long-term case studies that document what has worked and why.” Others have also observed the scarcity of critical analyses of cooperative collection development ventures (Bennett, Branin, Weber).

This article offers a descriptive account and critical analysis of three cooperative collection development projects undertaken by the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA)—a consortium of the academic libraries in Virginia. We begin with a review of the current state of cooperative collection development efforts among academic libraries and a synopsis of the collective work undertaken by VIVA librarians, who, with the help of a consultant, planned and conducted the pilot projects.

Background on Cooperative Collection Development

Libraries have a long, successful tradition of cooperation in many areas. At least one writer traces the tradition back to “the great library at Alexandria’s lending materials to Pergamum in approximately 200 B.C.” (Sohn) Cooperation in the functions of acquisitions and collection development is a more recent phenomenon. Most of the extensive literature on its history cites Walter Lichtenstein’s South American buying trip in 1913-14 as the first joint acquisitions program and the Farmington Plan of 1948 as the initial cooperative collection development program. (Sohn)

The fifty-year chronicle of cooperative collection development programs is summed up by many authors as filled with only modest successes (Atkinson, Bennett, Hewitt and Shipman, Shreeves, Weber.) Our collective sense of having achieved only limited success may itself constrain our potential. Branin concluded that, “[t]his lack of significant, ongoing achievement is certainly one force blocking more cooperative activity in the field of collection development, for momentum has never been established.”

The chronicle is not entirely bleak. Articles abound that describe the promise of cooperative collection development ventures—particularly in the early years of such ventures. (Dannelly, Dowd, Farrell and Reed-Scott, Ferguson, Forcier and Powell, Gwinn and Mosher, Hacken, Pettas and Bates, Sohn) In general, these more optimistic articles describe only one specific project, rather than a cumulative record of success in multiple projects, or describe the onset rather than the culmination of—or several years of experience with—a project. Dismal notes are more often struck usually in the articles that essay to evaluate the cumulative record of cooperative collection development nationwide. In these writings, there is consensus that the greatest successes have been achieved either at the local level (where geographic proximity is a critical success factor) or among libraries with similar missions and of similar size. (Branin, Hewitt and Shipman, Keller, Rutstein)

Most recently, some writers have begun to question the value of cooperative efforts to develop print collections. Shreeves makes a strong case for focusing cooperative ventures on the acquisition or creation of digital collections and for sharing expertise rather than print collections. He states that, “[t]he changes being experienced during the present transition to a largely digital environment offer new opportunities for cooperative collection development efforts but also call into question the value of investing in models based on a predominantly print environment. Collection development librarians may find that, in the future, their expertise may be the most important resource they have to share rather than the collections they are building.”

Background on VIVA Cooperative Collection Management Projects

Mindful of the uneven track record of such ventures, the VIVA Collection Development Committee nonetheless set forth in 1995 to explore the potential for the academic libraries in Virginia to build their print collections cooperatively. Our success in the cooperative acquisition of digital collections emboldened us and the success of the VIVA Interlibrary Loan Committee in speeding up the lending of materials among our libraries

gave us the certainty needed to rely on one another's collections. We shared a firm goal of increasing the number of unique titles within Virginia, aware, as De Gennaro has stated that, "[b]y itself, the network creates no new resources."

Before describing and analyzing the three cooperative collection management projects that VIVA undertook, a short description of VIVA itself may be helpful. VIVA was in the vanguard of the current trend to establish statewide consortia for purchasing electronic collections and enhancing the sharing of existing collections. Created in 1994, VIVA includes the libraries of the thirty-nine public colleges and universities in Virginia, which are located on fifty-two campuses. In addition, twenty-eight independent colleges participate in many VIVA activities. The impetus for creating VIVA came from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the initial funding proposal was developed by a subcommittee of the SCHEV Library Advisory Committee. VIVA's mission "is to provide, in an equitable, cooperative and cost effective manner, enhanced access to library and information resources for the Commonwealth of Virginia's academic libraries serving the higher education community." (Hurt, Perry)

The strong commitment to cooperation among the VIVA libraries has resulted in shared projects in nearly all aspects of library operations, including interlibrary lending, cataloging, special collections, user training, and collection development. The continued improvement of interlibrary lending has been a central goal throughout VIVA's history. In fact, VIVA developed as a partial successor to VALC (the Virginia Academic Library Consortium), whose focus was primarily on enhanced interlibrary lending. The VIVA Resource Sharing Committee (initially the ILL Enhancement Committee) oversaw the purchase of Ariel software for all the libraries (and training in its use), developed new ILL protocols, manages a financial subsidy for "returnables," and facilitates shared information and training toward the goal of fast, efficient ILL operations in all of our libraries.

The catalogers from the VIVA libraries have collaborated on a number of initiatives, most notably the development of shared guidelines for the description of electronic resources. The VIVA reference and instructional librarians have teamed up to develop efficient and effective staff training not only in the electronic collections that VIVA has purchased but also in other areas of shared training needs. The special collections librarians and archivists in Virginia's academic libraries have also initiated several cooperative projects, including shared training in putting finding aids online, joint development of a Web-based timeline of Virginia history with links to special collections, and coordinated projects to digitize materials from the special collections of the six largest libraries. The work of the Technical Issues Committee undergirded all other VIVA initiatives and branched into other areas such as exploring a shared, dedicated line to OCLC for FirstSearch, ILL, and technical services support before it was disbanded as no longer needed in the current technology environment.

While the commitment to cooperation pervades all aspects of library operations and has resulted in benefits throughout our libraries, the central focus of VIVA has been on the cooperative acquisition of digital collections. The list of shared purchases and subscriptions is extensive. A current inventory is available at www.viva.lib.va.us

The benefits to Virginia's students and faculty of the cooperative acquisition of digital collections have been substantial. VIVA tracks the financial benefits in several ways, most notably by estimating the savings that have accrued through joint purchases compared to what the same digital materials would have cost had each member library purchased them separately. From July 1994 to September 1999, VIVA estimates these savings at \$30.4 million. The greatest benefit realized from our cooperative acquisitions is the vastly expanded access to resources for the students and faculty throughout Virginia. For many of the member libraries, it would otherwise have been impossible to acquire these resources.

There are other, less tangible benefits that VIVA's members have received as well. All of the librarians who have had first-hand participation on VIVA's committees and workshops agree that one of the greatest rewards has been learning from each other. Shreeves suggests that in the future one of the most fruitful types of resource sharing among librarians will be sharing of our own expertise. VIVA librarians would readily endorse that concept. Another less tangible benefit for the members of the VIVA Resources for Users Committee (initially the Collections Committee) is that we gained hands-on experience in cooperative decision-making and selection. We have even gained experience in cooperative deselection decision-making, as we have needed to cancel several subscriptions.

Encouraged by our success, the benefits already realized, and a strong framework of cooperative decision-making, what was at that time the Collections Committee accepted the challenge when, in 1995, the VIVA Steering Committee charged the group with exploring the potential for cooperative development of our printed collections.

Process for Cooperative Collection Development

Prior to VIVA, there had been several other initiatives within Virginia to explore cooperative collection development. Most of the earlier initiatives were undertaken by the libraries of the six doctoral institutions in the Commonwealth—the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Polytechnic and State University. There had also been several successful ventures in cooperative collection development among small numbers of academic libraries located within specific geographic regions.

The most recent previous attempt at statewide cooperative collection development took place in 1991. The chief collection development officers shared information on serials cancellation projects that were underway at most of the libraries at that time (or planned for the near future). The group agreed, in principle, to continue to share information about anticipated cancellation or acquisition of expensive serial titles—defined as over \$500 in the case of cancellation and over \$250 for new purchases. However, after an initial flurry of activity, the ongoing sharing of information was only sporadic.

During the late 1980s and the early 1990s, efforts at cooperative collection development were hampered by a shared sense that interlibrary lending did not work well enough to allow extensive reliance on external collections; the scarcity of detailed serials holdings data; the absence of a shared union catalog; slow methods of communication;

geographic separation over large distances; and the moderate amount of overlap among doctoral programs.

By 1995, the landscape had changed considerably. Through new protocols for lending, widespread use of the Ariel software, subsidized express delivery of “returnables,” and a firm commitment to fast service, Virginia’s academic libraries had substantially improved the lending of materials among ourselves. Most of the libraries fulfilled and maintained commitments to input their detailed serials holdings on OCLC. E-mail revolutionized our communication processes. Geographic distances, moderate overlap among doctoral programs, and the lack of a shared catalog remained obstacles. The chief underlying obstacle—the difficulty of persuading faculty to rely on off-site collections—also remained, but its force had lessened as a result of movement from ownership to access, which had occurred nationally. The terrain was also changed by the fact that this venture was intended to include all thirty-nine public colleges and universities, as well as any interested independent colleges, rather than being limited to the six doctoral institutions.

Ready to explore new possibilities, but mindful of the limited success of past efforts within Virginia and nationally to build collections cooperatively, the VIVA Collections Committee recognized the need to bring in an outside expert to assist us in making a new start at cooperative collection development. We invited George Soete, a well-known expert on cooperative collection development and a skilled facilitator, to lead two workshops on cooperative collection management. (Hightower) We planned to hold the two workshops at eighteen-month intervals. The initial two-day workshop was held in November 1995.

The agenda for the initial workshop included:

- A review by Soete of the key points about collaborative collection management, based on his experience as a practitioner and consultant;
- Identification of threats and opportunities in the internal and external environments both pushing libraries toward a collaborative approach and pulling them away;
- Identification of key success factors for the collaborative program and specific projects; development of guidelines for the projects;
- Identification of key initiative areas: where would it make sense to mount further collaborative projects? Where not?
- Identification of potential projects: analysis of project ideas using the EASE/IMPACT model;
- Identification of strategies for implementation, including development of incentives for libraries to develop and implement projects, and development of ways of working with key library stakeholders (especially faculty) to interpret collaborative programs to them.

The participants at the 1995 workshop included the thirteen members of the VIVA Collections Committee, the chairpersons of the other VIVA Committees (at that time: Interlibrary Loan, Technical Issues, User Services), some other members of the VIVA Steering Committee, and the VIVA Project Coordinator.

The workshop proved a valuable way to pool and expand our shared knowledge about cooperative collection development and, in particular, to enhance our understanding of why cooperative projects succeed or fail. It provided a framework for a systematic analysis of VIVA's existing accomplishments, a review of needs and opportunities for collaboration, and a frank discussion of obstacles as well as opportunities. Perhaps most importantly, the workshop energized participants and reduced existing skepticism about the potential for success in an undertaking in which so many others (including ourselves and our local predecessors) had previously achieved only limited results.

The VIVA Collections Committee and Steering Committee agreed that the appropriate steps for VIVA to take at that time toward cooperative collection development would be to launch several pilot projects. We deliberately planned to have pilot projects that would differ from each other in significant ways, so that we might learn as much as possible from these varied experiences. The expectation was that the projects would test whether or not our libraries could or should attempt the coordinated development of print collections on any broad scale.

In typical workshop "brainstorming" fashion, participants generated a list of twenty-six possible projects. From that list, four high-priority, potentially successful areas were identified. The initial four areas were:

1. Nursing and Allied Health
2. Scientific, Technical, and Medical Literature
3. Business
4. Preservation

Subsequently, when the project areas were presented to the VIVA Steering Committee, which coordinates all major decisions for the consortium, preservation was vetoed as an area in which to set up a pilot project.

Before describing the next steps in developing the three pilot projects, it may be useful to record some of the chief points from the workshop deliberations about what works and what does not work in cooperative collection development ventures.

Soete identified for workshop participants the following key assumptions, derived from his extensive experience in cooperative projects:

- Technical systems are typically ahead of human systems. The chief difficulties in undertaking cooperative projects are human, not technical.
- The next frontiers in the cumulative development and refinement of cooperative collection development are:
 - Cooperative Collection Management (CCM) contracts that define objectives in a meaningful, clear way, and
 - Systems for measuring the effectiveness of CCM.
- Print will be around for a while and there is still benefit in developing shared collections.

- New formats also offer opportunities for sharing.
- Collection dollars will continue to decline.
- Saving money is a worthwhile objective and benefit of cooperation.
- Resource sharing is only successful when all participants perceive that their institutions gain from the cooperation.
- We need to examine our assumptions and mental models about what every library “must” have and what users “must” have on site. Too often, these assumptions are taken as self-evident without adequate review and reflection.
- Pilot projects allow valuable experimentation.
- Nothing is “forever.” In setting up cooperative collection development agreements, it makes sense to plan carefully and try to anticipate the future, but it is also important to monitor and review agreements and to adjust or end them when necessary.

At the time, the workshop participants agreed with these planning assumptions. Four years later, it is less likely that all participants would still agree with all of these assumptions.

Participants also endorsed the following project guidelines:

- Projects need not involve all members as active participants, but some benefits should accrue to all members as a result of the projects. Outsiders may also be involved.
- Agreements generated by the projects should be positive and enabling rather than negative and forbidding (that is, they should describe what the libraries will collect rather than what they will not collect).
- Incentives are important. Increased access to broader collections for faculty and students is one sort of incentive.
- Selectors themselves, rather than administrators, are in the best position to craft and implement agreements—with the help of liaisons from central VIVA committees such as the Collections and Steering Committees.

We would seek projects that auger success and are:

1. Comprehensible;
2. Innovative and interesting;
3. “Do-able;” and
4. Allow for wide participation and wide benefit.

The next step in developing the pilot projects was to appoint subcommittees of subject specialists who would develop specific projects within the identified area. Three Coordinated Collection Management (CCM) subcommittees were appointed: Allied Health and Nursing (AHN); Business; and Science/Technology/Medicine (STM). Each committee was charged with the following objectives and suggested strategies:

Objective 1: To save money by providing more cost-effective access to information resources.

Strategies:

1.1 Make recommendations for group purchases of electronic resources from the central, shared VIVA acquisitions budget.

1.2 Determine whether the use of pooled local institutional funds for group subscriptions or purchases would be cost-effective and feasible.

1.3 Undertake serial review projects to see if titles can be canceled as a result of enhanced knowledge of member's collections, access to VIVA electronic resources, and improved ILL service.

Objective 2: To provide all VIVA institutions with improved access to information resources in the assigned subject areas.

Strategies:

2.1 Make group purchases of electronic resources.

2.2 Develop WWW interface/homepage to point to group electronic resources.

Objective 3: To share information and develop staff expertise.

Strategies:

3.1 Develop ways to increase VIVA staff's knowledge of in state as well as Internet resources.

Strategies:

3.2 Promote student and faculty use of off-site electronic resources as alternatives to on-site ownership. (Millson-Martula)

As indicated above, the CCM subcommittees were asked to participate in the process of deciding on shared purchases of electronic collections in addition to their charge to develop pilot projects that dealt with print collections. The rationale for giving both assignments to the subcommittees was twofold. First, we believed that it might be desirable to develop electronic and print resources in unison. For example, the shared purchase of a specific indexing and abstract database might make it more feasible for the participating libraries to then shape their collective print journal collections in that subject area based, partially, on the titles indexed. Second, we felt it would be beneficial for the groups of subject specialists to develop a shared process of decision-making and selection by first tackling the shared expenditure of new, incremental funds from the shared, central VIVA budget. After a framework for these decisions was developed, it might be easier to tackle the more difficult work of shaping shared printed collections—an effort that might entail changes in the expenditure of existing, local institutional funds.

In retrospect, this decision may have resulted in some loss of the momentum that was generated at the workshop led by Soete. It took several months to appoint the subcommittees and for them to plan and hold initial meetings. Their initial focus was on recommending expenditures from shared funds prior to a fast-approaching fiscal year cutoff. Thus, the groups were not able to direct significant attention to planning pilot projects for the cooperative development of print collections until nearly a year after the initial workshop had been held. By that time, not surprisingly, a good deal of the original momentum had dissipated, as had the sense of a shared vision of the possibilities. Furthermore, some of the subcommittee members had not participated in the 1996 workshop

To rekindle a sense of shared vision and commitment and to assist the CCM subcommittees in planning their pilot projects we invited George Soete to return earlier than initially envisioned for the second, planned workshop. The workshop was held in November 1996. The workshop agenda included:

- An opportunity for all CCM subcommittee members to hear directly from the VIVA Steering Committee about the importance of cooperative collection management to VIVA;
- A review of the material from the November 1995 workshop, including re-visiting the reasons for choosing these subject areas for pilot projects;
- A discussion of questions and concerns that the CCM subcommittee members had about how to carry out their charge;
- An opportunity for the CCM subcommittee members to seek advice from a national expert, the VIVA Steering Committee and Collections Committee members, and from each other on how to move their projects forward; and,
- A cross-institution dialog about the politics at each of our institutions with regard to local autonomy, faculty readiness to rely on collections at other institutions, ability to gain “buy-in” from individual selectors, and so on.

The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for all those directly involved in the cooperative collection development pilot projects to be reinvigorated by a sense of the importance of their responsibilities, to learn more about cooperative collection development projects carried out elsewhere, to share information with each other, and to discuss frankly and openly the sometimes formidable obstacles to such resource-sharing. Charlene Hurt, then chair of the VIVA Steering Committee, conveyed an inspirational message to the workshop participants through Katherine Perry, the VIVA Project Director. Hurt urged us to see that we can not only accept, but celebrate, the concept of collective ownership of the totality of the state’s academic library resources. She recommended that we think in terms not of doing “more with less,” but rather of doing “more with more”—since the shared VIVA acquisitions budget had greatly expanded our collective resources.

By the end of the two-day workshop, the three CCM subcommittees had each developed a clearer sense of purpose and direction, as well as the nucleus of a plan for their pilot project. In addition, the members of the VIVA Collections Committee who did not serve on one of the CCM subcommittees (otherwise known as the “Wallflower Group”) developed a plan for a fourth pilot project. The projects were as follows:

1. Allied Health and Nursing: Using the titles indexed in CINAHL as a core journal list, build a shared statewide collection of journals in allied health and nursing. Categorize each title as tier 1 (must have at the local institution), tier 2 (want to have in state), or tier 3 (can rely on ILL from out of state). Seek agreements among in-state institutions to ensure coverage of all titles in tiers 1 and 2.
2. Business: Using the same 3-tier categorization described above, seek coordinated agreements about subscriptions to or cancellations of economics journals titles that cost over \$200.
3. Science/Technology/Medicine: Develop a cost-sharing model for the shared VIVA subscription to the Academic Press IDEAL database that would go into effect in 1997/98, when the terms of the AP contract require such cost sharing and shared decisions about subscription cancellations. Attempt to develop a model that would be applicable to other, future contracts
4. Project Confidence: Identify a core collection of an online full-text journal service that VIVA will commit to provide for at least three years in order to facilitate the review of local journal subscription in VIVA libraries and increase the potential for cancellation of local print or microform subscriptions in favor of reliance on the VIVA shared electronic subscription. This project would compare the full-text coverage of the standard services such as IAC, UMI, and Wilson for overlapping titles that VIVA would be likely to continue to provide whether by extending our shared subscription to the IAC *Expanded Academic Index* or by choosing an alternate provider in future years.

A description of the goals, methods and outcomes of three of the four projects described above follows. While the cost-sharing model developed by the STM Subcommittee was very important, we do not include it since its focus was not on cooperative collection management.

I. Allied Health and Nursing Journals Project

Introduction and Background

As indicated earlier, the November 1996 workshop was a catalyst for the coordinated collection management committees to develop relevant projects. The principal reason for this was the environment that it created and fostered. Committee members had the opportunity to get to know each other better and to develop mutual respect and trust. The Allied Health and Nursing (AHN) Subcommittee included six members representing all levels of state-supported institutions and one member representing the state's independent colleges. Thus, there was a need to bridge the gap separating members, and the workshop filled that role effectively. The workshop also provided the necessary focus and pressure to jumpstart the cooperative project process. Each committee was charged to develop appropriate strategies that would meet one of three objectives. Drawing upon the expertise of the workshop facilitator and having to work together in an intense and intimate environment enabled the committee to complete its task.

The AHN Subcommittee chose to focus on designing a project to achieve the first of the three cooperative collection management objectives (see above), which would provide more cost-effective access to VIVA resources. Specifically, the subcommittee would undertake a serial review project to see if titles could be canceled as a result of enhanced knowledge of members collections, access to VIVA electronic resources, and improved ILL service. Since the availability of allied health and nursing journals in electronic format was fairly limited, the subcommittee had to explore other options. As a result, it decided to “create a VIVA allied health and nursing journal collection” and promote enhanced knowledge of this collection.

After just two days of laying the groundwork for the project, the subcommittee was ready to develop it further and proceed as expeditiously as possible. Phases of the project and its timeline were defined. The project’s goals are:

1. To provide enhanced coverage of and access to the journal literature in the areas of allied health and nursing
2. To allow libraries to develop core collections to support curricular and research needs while relying on other sources for journals of secondary importance

The project has as a goal the identification, creation, and maintenance of an in-state core collection of journal literature of both print and electronic resources. Electronic resources were included because initially the subcommittee had expected that VIVA would contract for a significant online collection of health science journal literature. Since this did not occur, the project’s focus has been entirely on the coordination of print resources. IAC’s *Health Reference Center-Academic*, to which VIVA subscribes, does contain the full-text of approximately forty academic nursing journals. However, since the long-term viability of titles in aggregated article databases such as IAC is not guaranteed in the license agreement, the Subcommittee felt it supplemented but could not entirely replace print subscriptions in allied health and nursing.

The Allied Health and Nursing Journals Project is based on the principles of collective resources, shared access, and cooperative archiving and preservation. As such, it included the following key phases with corresponding time line:

- 1.1. Collection evaluation—March-April 1997
- 1.2. Review of relevant outgoing interlibrary loan photocopy requests for FY96 and FY97—July-August 1997
- 1.3. Negotiation of retention commitments—July-December 1997
- 1.4. Seek VIVA funding for needed subscriptions—September 1997
- 1.5. Project review—early 2000.

As often happens with many projects, initial plans or time projections were too ambitious and have required modification or even cancellation. While specifics will be detailed below, the committee found that its time line was too optimistic. Thus, it took longer than expected to recruit participants, evaluate collections, and negotiate commitment agreements. Negotiation of the retention commitments did not begin until March 1998.

Project Promotion and Participants

For the project to benefit Virginia's academic communities, it was essential to include as many significant collections as possible. While the bulk of libraries represented by committee members have significant collections in allied health and nursing, they constituted only a minority of Virginia's rich resources. Therefore, the committee sought participation by other academic libraries, both public and independent. The committee used both the VIVA and the independent college library listservs to promote the project. Committee members also contacted colleagues directly. The results of these efforts were quite favorable as project participants number sixteen, broken down as follows: three public doctoral institutions, four public comprehensive institutions, five public community colleges, and four independent colleges. The only major resource holder not participating in the project is the University of Virginia.

Defining the Collection

AHN Subcommittee members felt that to have greatest relevance, the project had to be based on a collection of journal titles that the academic community would consider as core. Rather than create this collection title-by-title, the subcommittee chose to use the two Brandon-Hill lists of core journal titles in allied health and nursing (www.nlm.nih.gov/psr/outreach/branhill.html). The two lists contain a total of 158 titles, and, of that number, project participants held current subscriptions to 147.

Using the Brandon-Hill lists constituted a collection-centered evaluation. For the project to have maximum relevance, the subcommittee decided to incorporate interlibrary loan and document delivery data as a user-centered method of evaluation. Specifically, the project involved participants' sharing their FY96 and FY97 ILL requests for allied health and nursing articles available only from out-of-state sources. The assumption was that if a significant number of libraries demonstrated a need for articles published in non-Brandon-Hill journals those titles should be added to the core collection and VIVA should fund the subscription cost involved. The subcommittee soon learned that not all participants were able to provide this data. However, data from eight libraries showed no significant demand for any particular title. The title showing the greatest number of requests, ten, involved only three libraries. This did not constitute sufficient statewide demand to warrant a VIVA subscription.

Retention Agreements and Title Commitments

With the collection identified and the holdings information entered into a database, the next step was to formulate the agreement by which participants would commit to retain journal titles. In drafting the agreement, the AHN Subcommittee wanted to insure the project's viability while also making it appealing for the participants by having them realize that it was in their best interests as well as those of the statewide academic community. The specific terms of the commitments to retain titles are limited in number and quite basic:

1. To maintain the library's current subscription to and backfile for each "assigned" title

2. To notify the project coordinator of an intent to terminate a commitment as far in advance of the actual termination date as possible
3. To provide copies of articles to VIVA libraries according to VIVA standards for document delivery and in compliance with all existing U.S. copyright laws
4. To provide the project coordinator with updated holdings at least annually and maintain the currency of OCLC Union List holdings information
5. To participate in the project review scheduled for 2000.

The major issue the subcommittee had to resolve involved the advance notice of a commitment termination. The subcommittee believed that specifying a period of six or twelve months, for example, would strengthen a library's commitment. At the same time, however, the subcommittee did not want to impose a factor that could act as a deterrent to a library's participation. Another issue was the number of libraries committing to retain each title. Some serials commitment registries involve one or two back up libraries in addition to the primary committing library. For this project, though, the subcommittee decided to streamline operations by identifying only one library per title.

How did the subcommittee match up journal titles and libraries? There were three key factors. First, titles held by only one library required no additional coordination by the subcommittee. Second, titles were usually "assigned" to the library with the longest backfile. Third, the subcommittee established as a goal the most equitable distribution of commitments. To the participants' surprise, the matching process took much less time and was much easier than anticipated.

What was the outcome of the process? With the exception of the doctoral institutions, participants were assigned an average of seven titles that each would commit to keep active subscriptions for at least three years. While this number does not seem too burdensome, the true test would come when decision-makers at each library reacted to the proposed agreements and lists of "assigned" titles. For an overview of the project, a Website is available at: www.gmu.edu/library/fen/viva/nah.html

Administration and Costs

The Allied Health and Nursing Journals Project incurred no obvious costs. The contributed services of AHN Subcommittee members represent the project's principal cost. Promotion of the project and database creation and maintenance were initially handled by the committee chairperson. All activities beginning with the distribution of the commitment agreements to participants were the responsibility of a second committee member acting as project coordinator.

Evaluation

Early in the year 2000, Allied Health and Nursing Journal Project participants and the project coordinator undertook an evaluation of the project's effectiveness and relevance. The results of that evaluation will determine if the project should continue, and, if so, how it should look. By 2000, many VIVA libraries may have significant collections of electronic

journals in allied health and nursing. As a result, the need for a print serials commitment project may change greatly.

Project Development

In March 1999, seven representatives of the sixteen participating libraries met to discuss the Allied Health and Nursing Journal Project, to plan future activities relating to the project, and to identify areas of possible future activity for VIVA.

While the attendees felt unable to provide a comprehensive assessment at that time, their consensus was that the project benefited participants but was probably unknown to many academic libraries in the state. Therefore, in an effort to increase awareness and benefits of the project, participants agreed to conduct an evaluation via survey in late 1999 rather than early 2000 as originally planned. In addition, the survey would address the issue of conducting a review of interlibrary loan periodical titles not readily available in the state but showing significant statewide demand. The goal would be to obtain either electronic or print subscriptions to these titles and add them to the current titles with commitments.

Regarding possible future activities for VIVA, the group identified three projects that could provide benefits to the VIVA community:

1. Coordinating the group purchase of basic medical texts online
2. Identifying VIVA holdings of titles in CINAHL and PsycINFO
3. Initiating cooperative collection management projects involving monographs.

While many project participants have demonstrated a clear interest in cooperation in the area of collection management, it is not known how representative of the state's academic library community this may be.

Benefits—Real or Elusive?

As this article is being written before the project is complete, it is not possible to determine how successful the project will be. Its success will likely depend on two critical factors:

1. The degree to which project participants accept the "invitation" to make commitments for the titles identified; and
2. The ease with which operations function when a library finds it necessary to terminate a commitment.

Early in its existence, the project encountered situations requiring changes in commitments—either a participant's subscription cancellation or a title being added to one of the Brandon-Hill lists. In both situations, when the project coordinator notified participants of the need for new commitments, participants readily offered to assume new commitments.

What we can state at this time, however, is that the project has considerable chances for success since it has been developed by incorporating a number of principles that are essential for a successful coordinated cooperative collection management activity:

1. The participants developed the project themselves (an external agency did not impose it upon them);
2. Participants freely chose to join the project (participants were not compelled to join);
3. The project's scope is limited and doable;
4. The participants possess a reasonable degree of trust toward each other although inter-institutional rivalries and competition do exist;
5. Participants are not separated by huge geographic distances; and
6. An efficient document delivery service, Federal Express, links the state-supported institutions.

Even if the Allied Health and Nursing Journals Project does not continue beyond the year 2000, the participants will have learned a great deal about cooperating effectively with other libraries. That fact will serve them well as they undertake new cooperative ventures, and that alone will constitute a real benefit for a large and diverse group of users and the libraries that serve them.

II. Economics Journals Project

VIVA's Business Coordinated Collection Management Subcommittee developed a project to coordinate the number of print subscriptions to economics journals at academic libraries statewide. The project was developed by members of the Business Subcommittee at the second VIVA workshop, the Coordinated Collection Management Workshop (November 21-22, 1996). Economics was chosen for the pilot project rather than larger areas like business to keep the number of titles under consideration small and to work with a clearly defined subject area. To further reduce the number of titles under consideration, only titles costing more than \$200 a year were reviewed. This would result in significant collective savings if a cooperative system could be developed.

In developing the pilot at the November workshop, the Business Subcommittee identified several areas of concern. First, the group was concerned with how access would be affected by fewer holdings in the state. How would needs be met? Would there be an effect on accreditation of programs. How efficient was interlibrary loan? A second area of concern was the methodology for identifying titles. Lists of holdings had to be obtained. Rationales for keeping or canceling had to be developed. The costs of alternative access had to be estimated. Who would be involved in the decision-making process? How could the project be administered and implemented? How would libraries adjust to the idea of less local and more statewide control? How would the success of the project be defined? Finally, the Business Subcommittee was also aware that canceling titles has market ramifications.

As the Business Subcommittee developed the pilot project, support grew for dealing with the budget constraints by finding a balance between more costly local autonomy and more efficient and less expensive centralized control. The philosophy that local autonomy

(serving only local patrons) could be replaced by a philosophy of cooperatively serving patrons statewide became a guiding principle of the pilot project.

Participation in the VIVA Economic Journals Pilot Project was voluntary. The project was announced in a letter sent to the directors of all VIVA institutions including the private institutions. The following institutions participated in the pilot:

- College of William & Mary
- George Mason University
- James Madison University
- Longwood College
- Mary Washington College
- Old Dominion University
- Radford University
- University of Richmond
- University of Virginia
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Polytechnic & State University
- Washington & Lee University

Methodology

Title Lists. Lists of titles of economics journals costing over \$200 that were held by participating institutions were compiled by asking Business CCM Subcommittee members to supply data from their own institutions and one other VIVA institution known to have a significant business curriculum. The process was initially somewhat unsystematic but resulted in lists of holdings at participating institutions. The process identified eighty-seven economics titles held by at least one institution. Lists were shared with participants so that all were able to check their holdings of the combined title list. The Subcommittee prepared a consolidated report of holdings by pilot participants. To expand the project, an open call was made on the VIVA listserv for participation in the pilot project by other institutions not previously contacted by the Subcommittee directly.

Data Collection. The lists of journals, prices, and holdings information were entered into an Excel worksheet by the project coordinator from each institution. The spreadsheets with the collective information were converted to html and made available on the Internet, allowing it to be easily shared by current and future participants. Of the twelve institutions that submitted holdings information, seventy-eight titles costing over \$200 were received by two or more schools. The participating institutions were then asked to rank each of their titles on the following scale:

1. Core title, a paper copy must be maintained in the library.
2. An important title that must be available at a reasonable cost (in comparison to the subscription price). The title could be available electronically or quickly available from another VIVA library that is committed to maintaining the subscription.

3. A title that may be canceled if the need arises, and traditional ILL is deemed adequate to meet the institution's needs.

The rankings supplied by each institution were entered in the spreadsheet and made available on the Internet. Finally, the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) was checked to determine which of the ranked titles were listed. The royalty prices for titles listed with the CCC would provide an idea of the amount of use necessary to justify the maintenance of a subscription to the journal.

Findings

The Business Subcommittee found varying prices paid by different libraries for the same titles. One library might pay less than \$200 for a particular title, while another paid over \$200. Therefore, any title that cost any institution over \$200 was included on the list for the pilot project. Eighty-seven titles were initially identified. Of these titles, seventy-eight titles were received by two or more schools. The total annual outlay for these seventy-eight titles was over \$230,000 in FY 96/97. Thus, there was a potential savings of over \$185,000 if only one subscription to each title could meet the needs of all VIVA institutions. These savings do not account for copyright fees, which would result from a reduction of subscriptions, nor do they answer the need of some institutions to actually have the issues on-site for daily use.

Sixty-nine of the seventy-eight titles with duplicate subscriptions in the state are registered with the CCC, which makes it reasonable to pay royalties for any articles requiring such payment in order to remain consistent with copyright law. Using the rankings assigned by the participating libraries, together with the CCC information, Thirty-nine titles were assigned either a "2" or "3" by at least one institution and are registered with the CCC. Assuming at least one institution would agree to subscribe to each title, a collective savings of over \$31,000 a year was possible for the titles included in the Economics Journals Project.

Recommendations

After analyzing and discussing the data collected, the Business Subcommittee decided against proceeding to a coordinated reduction of print subscriptions and developing commitments for institutions to maintain subscriptions to economics journals. Librarians from a number of participating institutions indicated a reluctance to commit to retaining print subscriptions for any long period of time. This was due to a sense that electronic journals were becoming a real option for many libraries. As more titles become available, expectations are high that many of the core titles within the fields of economics and business would be available electronically. Therefore, a commitment to maintain a paper subscription might be a hindrance rather than a help. Thus, the Business Subcommittee determined that it would not follow up the pilot with a larger project including all disciplines in business. However, pilot project results could be shared to enable individual institutions to make cancellations, since it was possible that another institution in the state could supply it. The data that had been gathered was of some value to institutions now suffering budgetary restrictions.

Rather than following up with another analysis of institutional subscriptions, the Business Subcommittee plans to further investigate VIVA members' business and economics subscriptions and their use. The committee members believe that a greater need exists for assisting members in making full use of Business and Economic resources made available through VIVA, especially in those institutions without a specialist in business resources. Thus the immediate and future benefit of sharing expertise remains perhaps the greatest gain for VIVA from the Economics Journals Project.

III. Project Confidence

Introduction & Project Description

While the majority of VIVA Collections Committee members are also members of one of the subject oriented subcommittees, several committee members who were not members of a subcommittee at the Coordinated Collection Management Workshop in 1996 formed a workgroup to investigate the possibility of a general or broadly focused project. One focus for a project that quickly developed support was to reduce the number of microform holdings statewide of journal titles in IAC's Expanded Academic Index, an immensely popular VIVA offering.

Brainstorming also enabled the group to identify a major problem that seemed to hold back progress of a consortium such as VIVA in which all the dollars came from central (separate) state funds. VIVA's offerings, which included some very important electronic resources, were not having a significant impact on local cancellation decisions and yet this had been an important goal for VIVA from its inception. The problem centered on the fact that VIVA subscribed to a growing array of attractive electronic resources but a significant number of librarians around the state felt that the offerings might change over time or that dollars from the state of Virginia might be decreased or disappear. The uncertainty about what VIVA would offer in the future led in some instances to a reluctance to make local decisions such as canceling local print and/or even (duplicate) electronic subscriptions. Since new resources were often proposed to the Collections Committee as potential acquisitions, the possibility that the committee might decide to stop a subscription in favor of another product was real. Therefore the project committee members decided that whatever project was developed, it should increase the confidence levels of members about VIVA resources. Thus, the group dubbed its plan Project Confidence.

Project Confidence would involve VIVA's commitment to providing a general academic full-text periodicals database for a period of time. Initially, the committee members discussed a project that would involve coordinating local microform and paper cancellation decisions. Local CD-ROM holdings might also duplicate offerings in the full-text database and could also be reduced. Thus a major goal of Project Confidence would be reducing/eliminating duplication. This seemed difficult to achieve if the method involved coordinated cancellation decisions. Another influential factor in planning the project was a variety of concerns about the IAC database's shifts in content and the extent of its full text coverage of print counterparts. Finally, some Project Confidence committee members felt

that focusing on cancellation decisions was somehow privileging print in an environment where collective buildup of digital resources was the basis for creating the consortium.

During the planning session at the 1996 workshop, the project focus was recast as an effort to identify a core list of electronic titles that VIVA would provide access to for at least three years. If that could be achieved, then the committee felt institutions would be free to make local decisions after analyzing local data and user needs at their own pace over a period of years rather than under the pressure of a group deadline. After struggling somewhat with criteria for a core list, the committee decided to look at the overlap in titles of IAC's Expanded Academic Index and comparable products from UMI, Ebsco, and other vendors. A pretest check of twenty titles contained in three general academic full-text periodicals databases including Expanded Academic Index revealed that the overlapping titles were those that would likely be identified as "core titles"¹ by collection development librarians. The committee felt that although content of general database products would change over time, it was very likely that the core (or overlapping) titles they identified would be included in the databases, no matter which vendor VIVA selected.

Methodology

The VIVA Project Director and student assistants proceeded by compiling lists of titles in four full-text periodicals databases from IAC (538 titles), Ebsco (982 titles) Wilson (317 titles), and UMI (706 titles). The data was analyzed by committee members individually, and then discussed by the group in conference calls.

Outcomes

After reviewing the list of 267 overlapping titles, titles that were included in IAC and in at least two of the three other databases, Project Confidence committee members felt that the overlapping titles would serve as a core list of titles that VIVA would endeavor to supply to members for at least three years. After receiving the endorsement of the Collections Committee and the Steering Committee, the project goal was announced on the VIVA listserv and lists of core titles were distributed to VIVA libraries in April 1997.

Project Confidence was an important step in cooperative collection management efforts for VIVA. In focusing on titles in a full-text collection that would definitely be offered by the consortium, it was not dependent on the many details and decisions involved in coordinating cancellations. It was quickly off the ground and running just a couple of months after the 1996 workshop. The data gathering and decision-making was completed in the spring of 1997. The project met the goal of facilitating review of local collections yet offered institutions complete flexibility in timing the review of local holdings and making decisions about duplicate titles in a variety of formats. The project's value to the participants was high since it was relatively fast and easy to plan and implement and resulted in a clearly positive outcome that we believe has strengthened cooperative spirit throughout VIVA. Of greatest value perhaps, was planning process itself, which required a switch in thinking about cooperative collection development from the usual focus on cancellation (or loss) to guaranteeing the availability of a popular and useful full-text offering of core titles.

While VIVA did not track local cancellation decisions attributed to Project Confidence, the consortium did conduct a cost-savings study for 96/97 that showed that collectively over \$8,000 in direct cost savings (most likely from local cancellation of print or microform journal titles) were attributable to VIVA's subscription to IAC's Expanded Academic Index. In addition to direct cost savings, data from the 96/97 study showed the actual added value to VIVA member libraries (1995-1997) of the IAC database to be over \$4 million. The data gathered and analyzed for Project Confidence proved to be tremendously useful for future decision-making and negotiations about VIVA resources. When VIVA conducted an RFP for a full-text general periodicals database in 1998, the list of "core titles" that had been identified for Project Confidence served as the list of required title content from vendors responding to the proposal. Finally, the project's goal of ensuring access to electronic resources for a period of time (three years) was achieved. This achievement came about largely because the participants were able to take a different approach to coordinated collection decision-making in the electronic environment.

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